

HB 166 -- Children's Access to Incarcerated Mothers

Sponsor: Hubbard

Beginning January 1, 2014, this bill requires the Department of Corrections, in cooperation with the Children's Division within the Department of Social Services, to establish a two-year pilot project to increase the access that children, from birth to 17 years of age, have to their incarcerated mothers. A person who has pled guilty to or been found guilty of any offense committed against a child that would disqualify her from being reunited with her children after her children were taken into state custody or who has been convicted of child abuse is not eligible to participate in the project. The project must cover the Chillicothe Correctional Center and the Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center in Vandalia. The Department of Corrections and the division must collaborate on the project by providing transportation for visits once a month or through any other means available to increase children's visitation with mothers who still have parental rights. Transportation for the child and his or her caretaker must be provided, and the caretaker is required to attend the visit. The project must focus on, but cannot be limited to, children who live 50 miles or more from the facility where the mother is located. Funding for the project must come from existing appropriations or any funds specifically appropriated for the project. At the end of the two-year pilot project, the department and division directors must submit a joint report to the Governor and the General Assembly by February 1, 2017, on the efficacy of the project on both children and incarcerated mothers as well as the project cost and make recommendations on whether to expand the project and if so any needed changes.